

# HOUSING IN 2003

The quality of housing in the United States contributes to the quality of life. Since 1973, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has used the American Housing Survey (AHS) to gather information on occupancy, housing costs, fuel usage, water quality, repairs, improvements, and many other housing-related topics.<sup>1</sup> Most housing units (94 percent) were in good condition (lacking moderate or

<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau collects the AHS data for HUD and also collects data on housing through its Housing Vacancy Survey, a monthly supplement to the Current Population Survey. Estimates in this chapter are calculated using sample data from the 2003 American Housing Survey, weighted by housing unit controls based on Census 2000. These controls were adjusted for additions and losses to the housing inventory. As a result, these estimates (which may be shown

severe housing problems). Information from the AHS helps determine the number of people whose housing was substandard in some way and how many may need housing assistance.

## Types of Structures

In 2003, there were 120.8 million housing units in the United States. Most units, 74.9 million, were

in text, figures, and tables) will differ from housing unit estimates computed from either the intercensal estimates program or Census 2000. All comparative statements have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted. For further information about the sources and accuracy of the estimates, go to Appendix A.

## Words That Count

A **housing unit** is a house, apartment, group of rooms, or single room occupied or intended for occupancy as separate living quarters. Separate living quarters are those in which the occupants live and eat separately from any other people in the building and that have direct access from the outside of the building or through a common hallway.<sup>2</sup>

**Occupied units** are those occupied by at least one person who usually lives in the unit. By definition, the number of occupied housing units is the same as the number of households.

**Year-round housing units** include all occupied and vacant units, regardless of design, that are intended for occupancy at all times of the year.

A **single-family detached unit** is a single-unit housing structure with open space on all four sides.

A **single-family attached unit** is a single-unit housing structure that has one or more unbroken walls extending from ground to roof separating it from adjoining structures, such as a townhouse.

**Multifamily units** are housing units contained in multiunit structures, such as apartment buildings.

**Manufactured homes** are defined as housing units that were originally constructed to be towed on their own chassis. They may have permanent rooms

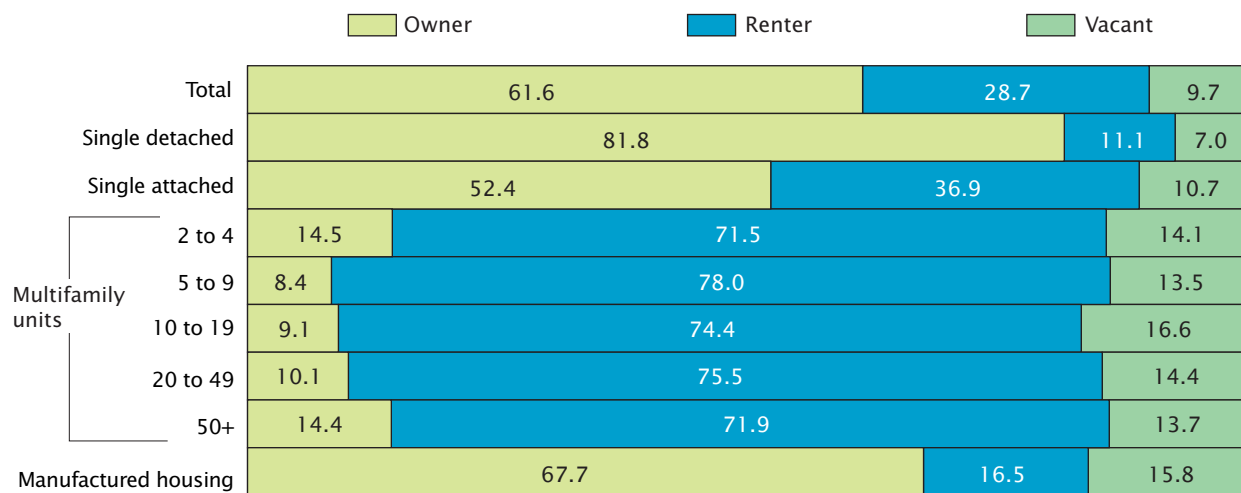
attached or other structural modifications at their present sites. The term does not include prefabricated buildings, modular homes, travel campers, boats, or self-propelled vehicles such as motor homes. Some people use the terms *trailers* or *mobile homes* in the same sense as *manufactured homes*.

**Moderate-to-severe physical problems** include at least one of the following 8 physical problems: (1) all flush toilets were broken at the same time for 6 hours or more on at least 3 occasions during the last 3 months; (2) unvented gas, oil, or kerosene heaters as primary heating equipment; (3) lack of a kitchen sink, refrigerator, or cooking equipment inside the structure for the exclusive use of the unit; (4) at least 3 of the following problems in public areas in multiunit buildings: no working light fixtures, loose or missing steps, loose or missing railings, or no working elevator; (5) at least 3 of the following upkeep problems: water leaks from the outside, such as from the roof, basement, windows, or doors; leaks from inside the structure, such as pipes or plumbing fixtures; holes in the floors; holes or open cracks in the walls or ceilings; more than 8 inches by 11 inches of peeling paint or broken plaster; or signs of rats in the last 90 days; (6) lack of complete plumbing facilities for exclusive use; (7) 3 or more heating equipment breakdowns last winter resulting in uncomfortable home temperatures; and (8) lack of electricity or exposed wiring and room(s) without outlets and blown fuses at least 3 times in the last 90 days.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of "eating separately" was part of the 2003 AHS but was not part of the Census 2000 definitions.

Figure 1.  
**Year-Round Housing Units by Occupancy Status, Type, and  
 Number of Units in Structure: 2003**

(Percent distribution)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Housing Survey, 2003.

single-family detached structures. Another 7.2 million were single-family attached units, such as town-houses. Manufactured or mobile homes accounted for 9.0 million units. The remaining 29.7 million units were in multifamily structures. While 10.0 million of these units were located in structures with 2 to 4 units, 4.3 million were located in structures with 50 units or more.

Of the 117.2 million units that were meant for year-round use, 72.2 million (62 percent) were owner occupied, 33.6 million (29 percent) were renter occupied, and 11.4 million (10 percent) were vacant, as shown in Figure 1. Another 3.6 million units were vacant seasonal units, not meant for year-round occupancy.

## Occupancy

Among year-round units, 82 percent of single-family detached units and 52 percent of single-family attached units were owner occupied, as shown in Figure 1. The proportion of owner-occupied manufactured homes was 68 percent. Regardless of the number of units in the structures, owner occupancy rates were lower among multifamily units, averaging 12 percent.

Among year-round units, 16 percent of manufactured homes, 14 percent of multifamily units, and 11 percent of single-family attached units were unoccupied.<sup>3</sup> At 7 percent, the percentage unoccupied was lowest for single-family detached units.

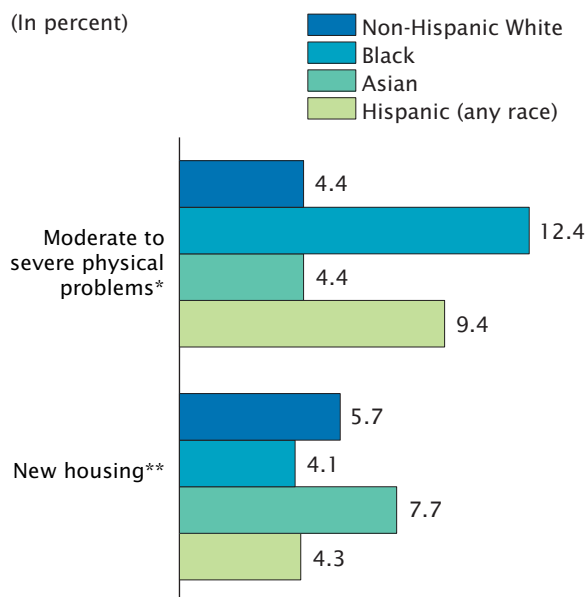
## Housing Elements

The 2003 AHS found that important housing elements were sometimes missing in both owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing. For instance, occupants believed the water was not safe to drink in 7 percent of owned units and 14 percent of rented units. One percent of owners did not have exclusive use of plumbing facilities or lacked some or all facilities, including hot piped water, bathtub and shower, or flush toilet. The proportion of renters without these plumbing facilities was nearly 2 percent. Less than 1 percent of owner households lacked complete kitchen facilities for exclusive use (including sink, refrigerator, and oven or burners); 4 percent of renter households were without these amenities.

<sup>3</sup> There was no significant difference between the percentages of unoccupied mobile homes and multifamily units.

Figure 2.

### Selected Housing Characteristics by Race and Hispanic Origin of Householder: 2003



\*See definition of moderate to severe physical problems at the beginning of this chapter.

\*\*Built within 4 years prior to the 2003 survey.

Note: Data are for single-race householders.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Housing Survey, 2003.

## Housing by Race and Hispanic Origin

Homeownership rates varied among the racial and Hispanic-origin groups.<sup>4</sup> In 2003, 68 percent of all households owned their own home. Seventy-five percent of non-Hispanic White households owned their own home, compared with 57 percent of Asian households, 48 percent of Black households, and 46 percent of Hispanic households.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The race or origin of the household is based on the race or origin of the householder, regardless of the race or origin of the other household members. The data in this chapter are for single-race populations. Use of single-race populations in this chapter does not imply that it is the preferred method of presenting or analyzing data. The Census Bureau uses a variety of approaches.

Because Hispanics may be any race, data for Hispanics overlap slightly with data for the Black and the Asian populations. Based on the total households surveyed in the 2003 AHS, 3.5 percent of Black households and 2.0 percent of Asian households were also Hispanic. Data on American Indians and Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders have not been shown because of their small sample size in the 2003 AHS.

<sup>5</sup> The ownership rates for Black and Hispanic households were not statistically different.

In 2003, 6 percent of all occupied housing units had moderate-to-severe physical problems that ranged from rats and holes in the floors to the lack of kitchen equipment, including a sink, refrigerator, or cooking equipment for exclusive use. With less than 5 percent of their housing units having moderate-to-severe problems, non-Hispanic White households and Asian households were the least likely to experience these conditions.<sup>6</sup> Black households were most likely to have moderate-to-severe problems (12 percent). The rate was 9 percent for Hispanic households.

Five percent of housing units with a non-Hispanic White householder and 8 percent of those with an Asian householder had been built in the 4 years prior to the 2003 AHS (Figure 2).<sup>7</sup> The proportion living in housing less than 4 years old was 4.1 percent among Black households and 4.3 percent among Hispanic households.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The percentages of households with moderate-to-severe problems were not statistically different for Asian and non-Hispanic White households.

<sup>7</sup> The percentages of households living in units built in the 4 years prior to the survey were not statistically different for Asians and non-Hispanic White households.

<sup>8</sup> The percentages of households living in units built in the 4 years prior to the survey were not statistically different for Black and Hispanic households.

## The Census Bureau Can Tell You More

For more detailed information, consult the following U.S. Census Bureau Current Housing Report: *American Housing Survey for the United States: 2003* (H150/03).

Look for detailed tables on the Census Bureau's Web site <[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)>. Click on "A" for the American Housing Survey or "H" for "Housing data."

Contact the Census Bureau's Customer Service Center at 301-763-INFO (4636) or e-mail <[hhes-info@census.gov](mailto:hhes-info@census.gov)>.

For information on the source and accuracy of the data, see Appendix A.